PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF APPLIED ETHICS: ETHICAL ISSUES IN THE CONTEMPORARY GLOBALIZATION PHENOMENA

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THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
ANDHRA UNIVERSITY
VISAKHAPATNAM, AP - INDIA

2013

We act in different capacities and roles in our social life and, hence, moral judgments are made in different social contexts such as health care, politics, economics, Science and Technology. Morality is a natural feature of human life. As human beings we cannot avoid making judgments about what is right and wrong, what one should do /should not, and what is valuable. We engage in ethics when we start to reflect on our moral judgments such as - Why is this right? What is the reason for this act? Can it be justified? Hence, ethics is the reflection on morality or - one might say - the theory of morality. This thesis document supported by the synopsis specifically looks at the role, challenges and pragmatic relativism of the applied ethical principals within the context of globalization phenomena.

The evaluation of ethical perspectives in a more practical and contentious issues further leads us into the realm of “Applied Ethics” For example – look at the following paradigms that Applied Ethics touches upon:

In healthcare, moral issues are related to several decisions involving life and death and overall well-being of all humans, Such issues include :

- Should we with any means retain life-saving measures for the terminally ill / endorse euthanasia?

- Should we introduce screening for genetic diseases?
- Should we allow abortions and support pro-choice groups?
- Should we endorse clinical trials on human beings let alone animal lovers condemn such trails on animals ?

In socio-political subjects, judgments often concern value conflicts; the decision maker must choose an alternative that might promote one or the other value: equality, liberty, well-fare etc or which would promote most common good.

In the current age of science and technology – there are more compelling moral bi-polarization that we witness in application of science and engineering to collect, store and distribute information.

Given the above eternal debates on the applied ethics subject – let us further evaluate the role of applied ethics in the contemporary global phenomena.

Applied ethics is the art and may be a science to an extent – to reflect on moral dilemmas and moral problems in the contemporary social contexts across the globe. One of the most influential authors in the field of applied ethics, James Childress explians applied ethics as follows:

“The terms “applied ethics” and “practical ethics” are used interchangeable to indicate the application of ethics to special arenas of human activity, such as business, politics and medicine,

and to particular problems, such as abortions.” Applied ethics intends to resolve or at least discuss the allied "moral dilemmas." Such moral dilemmas are involved in many ordinary societal situations with other people, and in many situations which involve conflicting demands”.

For instance, the conflict between the individual's right to smoke and the law prohibiting smoking in a public place is not a critical moral dilemma. "Moral dilemma arises only if there are moral considerations for taking each of two opposing courses of action." When we consider a moral question, we need to know and understand the codes unique to the dilemma in question. And in order to know and understand these codes, we need to communicate with people concerned with ethical issues and understand the opposing perspectives in a methodical approach. In that sense, applied ethics is a process, which has produced "Particular Judgments and Actions," "Rules," "Principles," and "Ethical Theories,"

It is therefore important that applied ethics be intercultural and interdisciplinary, in order to deal with problems involving very different realms of human life including social, political, economical, legal, medical and biological codes. This is a very interesting aspect of "applied ethics" and before we evaluate the contemporary

challenges of Applied Ethics – we should first renew our understanding specific to the chronological evaluation of the Applied Ethics.

Chronological development of Applied Ethics:

Applied ethics as a distinct branch of Philosophy (more so as an extension of Moral Philosophy) - first emerged as an intellectually active area of interest in the 1960's in response to major public concerns about the ethics of health care – the treatment of research subjects, abortion, euthanasia, the patient-physician relation, etc.

In a famous expression renowned British philosopher Stephan Toulmin (1922-2009) said that "Medicine saved the life of ethics". In the 1960th most moral philosophers worked with conceptual and epistemological questions. Not many were engaged in normative ethics and even lesser bothered to analyze moral problems in the real world. As a consequence of the approach, academic ethics was by many was considered as one of those peculiar philosophical subjects. However in the beginning of the 1970s, the situation had eventually changed. Innovations in the healthcare and medicine saved the lives and consequentially save the life of applied ethics; there were new moral problems in medicine and there were no ready-to-hand answers. Ethicists were

wanted and consulted to untangle the moral obligations of the family members and the healthcare professionals.

Applied ethics with its roots in Theological Ethics:

Applied ethics also has its roots in theological ethics. As a classical example one can mention the "theories of *Just War*" propelled by Augustine's (5th Century) and Aquinas's (13th Century). The conditions they set up for a war to be '*just'* are still highly relevant in the present discussion on 'just war'. Furthermore, ethicists in both the Catholic and the Protestant tradition were among the first to engage in the challenges related to medical ethics. The theories and emancipations related to the "Just War" from the distant past (as mentioned above) – are still applicable to the contemporary global phenomena including the American war on the Iraq the recent years. That shows the concept and applications of the applied ethics are applicable from the remote past and very much relevant to the most recent times.

Review of Information Ethics from an academic and research perspective:

In a rudimentary sense, Applied Ethics involves the mechanical application of normative theories to particular cases. However from a practical perspective- "applied ethics" is relevant and applicable to every one in a self-reflective way, and that means

reflecting on the status of our normative ethical theories on individuals, groups and society in general.

Applied Ethics and limitations of Normative Ethics:

Applied ethics is often distinguished from normative ethics. The purpose of normative ethics is usually regarded as the attempt to discover the moral theory which makes the best sense of our considered moral intuitions. For example, some normative ethicists believe that our obligation is to do whatever promotes the most pleasure (and the least pain) for the most people involved in any decision. For other normative ethicists, rights are fundamental.

Applied ethics is rather like applied mathematics. In applied mathematics (or engineering, and so on) we take our mathematical theories - which we know independently of any particular case to be true - and we apply them to concrete problems, such as how much weight a particular bridge will bear given such and such forces acting on such and such a type of material. However - If we think of applied ethics in the same way, we may well imagine that the task of applied ethics is to take our normative theories - which we know independently of any particular case to be true - and apply them to concrete moral problems, such as abortion, euthanasia, and so on.

However this approach has many limitations. Let us further examine this in the following paragraph and illustrations. For now -

if we consider how we arrive at our normative theories in the first place, it is at least partly as a result of considering which theories handle specific cases (such as abortion, euthanasia, and so on) most plausibly.

The analogy with applied mathematics therefore threatens to mislead us about the way that moral reflection actually proceeds. Typically, we begin with intuitions about what is morally right and test these intuitions against difficult cases. When we find a conflict, or an inconsistency, or the theory yields results which seem terribly implausible, we often revise the theory to bring it more in line with our considered views. So when we "apply" a normative theory to a specific case, such as abortion or euthanasia, as often as not we are "testing" the theory at the same time that we consider the particular case."

Applied Ethics and review of Kant's Perspectives:

Immanuel Kant could not help us find a way to resolve this dilemma. His imperative of the end in itself is as follows: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end."

In this case, if we accept any other person as an end in itself, we have to necessarily respect the choice of the person who has the

genetic make-up. Otherwise, our utilitarian demand to keep the gene for future mankind means to regard the individual simply as a means. Kant seeks the most universal moral principle. He has denied the universal validity of the so-called Golden Rule, "quod tibi non vis fieri," to show the priority of his Categorical Imperative as a standard or principle of moral. In his book "Groundwork of Metaphysic of Moral", he said;

"It [so-called Golden Rule] cannot be a universal law since it contains the ground neither of duties to oneself nor of duties of kindness to others (for many a man would readily agree that others should not help him if only he could be dispensed from affording help to them), nor finally of strict duties towards others; for on this basis the criminal would be able to dispute with the judges who punish him.

“Don't do something which you don't want to be done to you.” It is certain that if the criminal would say the judges could not punish him, because they themselves might not want to be punished. In this Book, I think, Kant intended to establish a new foundation of moral other than principles of Christianity. But Kant mentioned special cases in order to deny the universality of other principles, e.g., the Golden Rule. Principles which are intended to be universal

are may sometimes appear useless and controvesial in special cases.

According to Kant, the dilemma in the case of sickle cell anemia is not a serious one, but no dilemma occurs because everyone ought to be treated as an end in itself. But we cannot really treat every person in such a way. Subjects with sickle cell anemia could be regarded as the means by researchers. In a wide sense, we regard them and use them as the means for future mankind. We are in effect, accustomed to treating other people as means such as in business dealings, or even asking someone how to find the train station.

The rise of Applied Ethics – A Sociological response phenomenon:

The rise of applied ethics had many reasons. In this review, we could ponder upon three fundamental subjects. Firstly - During the 20th century the Western societies in particular and world at large had experienced a period of secularization. Less and less people attended the churches and less and less people asked for moral advice from the Church. In the words of German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) there was a change from “moral heteronomy” when moral answers were provided by an authority, often the Church, to “moral autonomy” when the individual him/herself had to formulate an answer. And this happened at a

time when in medicine, as well as in other social arenas, new and difficult moral problems arouse such as pre-natal diagnostics, euthanasia, human cloning etc

A second, complementary explanation of the rise of applied ethics relates to new moral problems facing the society not least due to new technical possibilities. For example: in neo-natal intensive care the possibilities to save very early born babies increased continuously. But in many cases the babies were saved to a short and handicapped life. Where should the doctor draw a borderline? When should a baby be saved and when let to die? Another example from another arena: through the development of computer technology it became possible to store more and more information, including information about individuals. However, given that it in a complicated society is necessary to store personal information, this development may threaten the so called individual privacy. When does the storage pose a threat and whom it be shared and not shared? If individual information (Personally Identifiable Information – PII) is to be shared with other entities even on a legitimate basis – how do we ensure the continued confidentiality trough the extended chain of custody for such data. In cases where large private data is leaked – the damage that could happen is unforeseeable and this clearly false in the realm of

Applied Ethics as what is legitimate and how do we deal with the collection, assimilation, storage, distribution and disposal of individual data while respecting the ethical principles and individual choices of the common man.

The problems mentioned are examples of what in ICT-ethics (Information and Communication Ethics) has been called “policy vacuums”: we do not know how to handle the new situations and we lack moral and legal concepts and principles to deal with them. Thus, the rise of applied ethics can be explained by a need to fill the policy vacuums.

Thirdly - Developments in social science and humanities often mirror contemporary social change. At the end of the 1960th and the beginning of 1970s the student movement and the new left movements challenged the norms of then established society. There were heated discussions over topics such as the Vietnam War, social injustices, poverty in the third world, inequality between men and women and the maltreatment of animals. Many philosophers were engaged in the discussions.

From this perspective, the rise of applied ethics can be seen as a philosophical response to a new social situation. Let us further analyze the development applied ethics in the last 30 years or so…
In the 1970’s and 1980’s, new topics were added to the list –

- Environmental ethics,
- Business ethics,
- Professional ethics,
- Information and Communication ethics,
- the ethics in Public life & public policy.

Late 1990s and in the current decade there is a tremendous need identified for further inquiry and research in the field of Information ethics as a broad subject and computer ethics as a specialization exploring the ethical implications as they are applicable on collecting, storing and distribution of “information” that is related to human interest and scientific development.

In the next section – let us discuss the problems with sociological impact those are relevant to the field of “Information Ethics”

Applied Ethical perspectives & Contemporary Globalization:

Whereas roots of globalization are far reaching, it is primarily a modern age phenomenon as the countries in the world are far more connected and the people across the globe can exchange their ideals more instantly through the development of social media. Modern business operation and the world economy are characterized by domination of multinational corporations, strong presence of the government in economy and the long-term

tendency towards globalization in manufacturing, trading and consumption in the world.

Containing both risks and opportunities, globalization is a problem of manifold in nature. For some it means regression and falling into “neocolonialism”, the others glorify it.

Applied ethics is distinguished from normative ethics, which concerns what people should believe to be right and wrong, and from meta-ethics, which concerns the nature of moral statements. Applied ethics deals with the analysis and interpretation of specific, controversial moral issues such as animal rights, euthanasia, abortion, organ-transplantation, etc. Since the introduction of applied ethics is in philosophical stream, the role of philosophy is expanded and the claim of the philosopher to intervene in all the problems relating to man, society and nature is being justified. Applied ethics is one of the most influential branches of philosophy and it has become a useful tool of decision making in society. So more than working in the realms of academic moral philosophy, applied ethics surpasses academic moral philosophy and achieves the status of philosophy of social purpose. This working of applied ethics as fulfilling the demands of social purpose is regular, systematic and continuous one.

Applied ethics is viewed as the reflective philosophy of modern age. It gives importance to reflective actions of human beings, both as an individual and as a group, so as to reduce the negative consequences of actions. The historical reasons for the development of applied ethics are rather complex and diverse. The main point behind developing applied ethics is that 'how best we can do those things that we all agree ought to be done'.[3] The great deal of problems concerning applied ethics are directed towards professions like medicine, legal, environmental, business etc., which shows the integration of applied ethics with all these professions. Since then the politicization of moral philosophy became deeper and this led to the expansion of philosophical landscape of ethical philosophy. The development of media also played a vital role by promoting meaningful discussions and debates centered on applied ethics.

Contemporary scholar and philosopher Prof. Kurt Bayertz points out about the characteristics of modern societies in developing applied ethics. He formulates that modern societies are reflective societies and applied ethics could be understood from societal reflection perspective and provide solutions to cotemporary global issues.

Kurtz argues further that the fear that applied ethics will disappear without trace is unfounded and as society is divided into various sub-systems and institutions. The stream of applied ethics will continue to grow as society encounters new problems.

It is clear that the object of applied ethics is to reflect on the day-to-day problems of society rather than merely engaging in construction of theories of sorts. The day-to-day problems are the result of man's actions.

The turn in the applied ethics implied that many moral philosophers changed their focus from traditional philosophical explorations of value system into those ethical aspects that are important to general well being of the society. As we understand Moral philosophers were traditionally engaged in analyzing moral semantics and other issues in meta-ethics. Now, more and more philosophers worked with moral problems in contemporary society. However, one need to understand that the emphasis given to applied ethics does not mean a turn away from issues in meta-ethics.

This research topic focuses on the sociological implications of the applied ethics in the light of contemporary globalization and also includes its newer extension – which is information ethics.

The paradigm shift in the role of applied ethics points to more broader social responsibilities of a moral philosopher in the 21st century. The need of the hour is to interpret and analyze various socio-ethical challenges and provide an acceptable solution that protects the ethical foundations of the belief systems and the institutions at the same time. Information Ethics deals with value system and moral dilemmas of individuals, businesses, institutions and governments – when it comes to collecting, storing and distributing of the "information". In the current society the value of "information" is immense and inappropriate and unauthorized usage of information leads to compromising individual privacy, institutions trust and national interests.

The broader questions those are quintessential are – how "information" is created, who would be the genuine owners of the information, can institutions (public /private) promote or enforce mandatory collection of individual information against his/her will, what would be acceptable criteria of divulging the information after certain period of time, how to ascertain the expiration date for once "classified" information, efficacy of the global regulations such as Safe-Harbor Act in USA, Data Protection Acts scripted by European Union Directives and RTI Act (Right to Information Act) that was instituted in India

Plan of the Study:

The Study is organized in seven Chapters.

1. Chapter - I Introductory Chapter deals with how ethics considers man as the measure of all things and keeps man at the centre.
2. Chapter – II Second Chapter 'Religion and Ethical Values' discusses about all the religious ethics which include, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Christian and Islam religious values.
3. Chapter – III 'Ethic and Social Justice' presents Justice, liberty, equality and fraternity as the most essential concomitants of a truly democratic order and therefore only elucidate the concept of a democratic republic in which ethics will be a human phenomenon.
4. Chapter - IV is devoted to the 'The Rise of Applied Ethics' which discusses how the term 'applied ethics' has recently expanded to cover many problems.
5. Chapter - V presents the 'Contemporary Ethical Perspectives in Globalization.' Globalization has created many ethical problems that are beginning to surface with greater force.
6. Chapter - VI presents 'Professional Ethics, Codes of Conduct and Moral Responsibility.'
7. Chapter VII presents the Summary or conclusions
8. Separate bibliography was also included in the main thesis document which accounts for the references of hundreds of books those were reviewed for the research.